

Message Text

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PAGE 01 TEL AV 04641 070302Z
ACTION SCS-06

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2420

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 4641

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: CASC, IS
SUBJECT: BLACK HEBREWS

REF: A. STATE 34505; B. TEL AVIV 1308

1. WE DISCUSSED INFORMALLY WITH MICHAEL BAVLY, NORTH AMERICAN DESK, MFA, DIGGS' CONCERN ABOUT THE BLACK HEBREWS AND THE CONTENT OF HIS LETTER ADDRESSED TO MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR BURG. BAVLY SUGGESTED THAT WE TRANSMIT THE LETTER DIRECTLY TO THE MINISTER, BUT ADDED THAT HE FORESAW DIFFICULTIES IN GRANTING ENTRY TO THOSE EXPELLED PREVIOUSLY. HE ALSO SAID INFORMATION THAT THE VIETNAMESE REFUGEES WERE GRANTED CITIZENSHIP IS ERRONEOUS. THEY ARE HERE ON VISITORS' VISAS, SUBJECT TO PERIODIC EXTENSION. WE THEREFORE SUGGEST THAT REFERENCE TO VIETNAMESE AND CHRISTIANS BEING GRANTED CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS BE OMITTED FROM LETTER TO BE TRANSMITTED, SINCE THERE IS NO SUBSTANTIATED EVIDENCE OF DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT ACCORDED TO NON-JEWISH GROUPS IN ISRAEL AND INCORRECT INFORMATION WOULD SERVE ONLY TO FOCUS BURG'S REPLY ON IT RATHER THAN THE SUBSTANCE OF THE TREATMENT OF THE BLACK HEBREWS.

2. DR. BERNARD RESNIKOFF, RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE HAS INFORMED THE EMBASSY THAT ON THE BASIS OF THE CONSENSUS STATEMENT
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PAGE 02 TEL AV 04641 070302Z

ADOPTED AT THE JANUARY 12 MEETING IN NEW YORK, HE HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO FOLLOW UP WITH THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR ON ACTION TAKEN REGARDING THE NORMALIZATION OF STATUS OF BLACK HEBREW COMMUNITY. THE COMMUNITIES OF ARAD AND DIMONA HAVE CONDUCTED CENSUS OF BLACK HEBREWS AT THE REQUEST OF THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR AND SOME DISCUSSIONS HAVE TAKEN PLACE BETWEEN THE MINISTRY

AND MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS REGARDING MORE ADEQUATE HOUSING
ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE GROUP.

3. HISTADRUT TREASURER ALMOSLINO HAS INFORMED THE
EMBASSY THAT HISTADRUT HAS FORMED A SPECIAL COMMITTEE,
WHICH HE CHAIRS AND WHICH HAS MET THREE TIMES. THE
MEMBERS OF THE BLACK HEBREW SECT HAVE NOW BEEN INVITED TO
JOIN THE HISTADRUT IN ORDER TO BECOME ELIGIBLE FOR THAT
ORGANIZATION'S MEDICAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES. A NUMBER
OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE ALREADY REGISTERED AND ARE THUS
COVERED BY THE FULL RANGE OF SOCIAL SERVICES. AMONG
SEVERAL UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS IS THAT OF POLYGAMY.
HISTADRUT IS UNABLE TO RECOGNIZE THE LEGAL STATUS
OF MORE THAN ONE WIFE, ACCORDING TO ISRAELI LAW. OF
COURSE, ADDITIONAL WIVES COULD BE COVERED BY SEPARATE
POLICIES, BUT THIS WOULD BE CONSIDERABLY MORE EXPENSIVE.
ANOTHER PROBLEM IS THAT FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS THE COMMUNITY
WILL NOT ACCEPT DRUGS AND CERTAIN OTHER MEDICAL SERVICES. IT
ALSO INSISTS ON THE SEPARATE EDUCATION OF ITS CHILDREN.
NEGOTIATIONS ARE NOW IN PROGRESS REGARDING SOME VOCATIONAL
TRAINING. THE HISTADRUT COMMITTEE AT ITS LAST MEETING
AGREED TO PETITION THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR TO
ACCORD FULL LEGAL RESIDENCE STATUS TO THE COMMUNITY
AND OPEN THE WAY FOR ITS MEMBERS TO BECOME CITIZENS.
HISTADRUT HAS INFORMED BAYARD RUSTIN, CHAIRMAN OF
BLACK AMERICANS IN SUPPORT OF ISRAEL COMMITTEE (BASIC)
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PAGE 03 TEL AV 04641 070302Z

OF THE STATUS OF ITS EFFORTS.

4. EMBASSY REQUESTS CLEARANCE WITH CONGRESSMAN DIGGS
REGARDING THE SUGGESTED CHANGE IN TEXT OF LETTER. WE WILL,
OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO FOLLOW UP WITH THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR
REGARDING GOI PLANS FOR NORMALIZING THE STATUS OF
COMMUNITY.
LEWIS

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